

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSC-05

PM-03 DODE-00 L-01 SP-02 ACDA-10 DHA-02 MCT-01

IO-06 /064 W

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P R 261011Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5550

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 19011

LIMDIS

CINCPAC ALS FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINT, CB, VM

SUBJECT: PURPORTED COUP PLOT IN CAMBODIA LINKED TO PRO-
VIETNAM FACTION

REF: BANGKOK 18560 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: RTG SOURCES SUSPECT A PRO-VIET-NAM FACTION IN CAM-
BODIAN LEADERSHIP PLANNED A COUP IN PHNOM PENH EARLIER THIS
YEAR, BUT BELIEVE DISCOVERY OF THE PLOT IN FEBRUARY PROBABLY
LED TO SOME OF THE PERPETRATORS' EXECUTION IN APRIL. DEBRIEFING
OF CAMBODIANS

INDICATES TO RTG THAT CAMBODIAN INFORMATION MINISTER, HU MIN.
WAS EXECUTED, AND DEPUTY PM FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, IENG SARY,
AND SENIOR KC OFFICIAL, HOU YUON (FORMELY GRUNK IN-
TERIOR MINISTER) MAY HAVE BEEN IMPLICATED IN THE LEADERSHIP
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STRIFE. END SUMMARY.

1. WE HAVE RECEIVED DIFFERING VERSIONS FROM MFA AND J-2
OF THE BACKGROUND TO PUBLIC REMARKS BY SUPREME COMMAND
DEPUTY GENERAL KRIANGSAK ABOUT A POSSIBLE COUP ATTEMPT IN
CAMBODIA (REFTEL). IMPLICATIONS ARE, NEVERTHELESS, THE
SAME. MFA SOURCES INFORMED US INFORMATION WAS DERIVED

FROM DEBRIEFING OF A CAMBODIAN REFUGEE WHO LEFT PHNOM PENH IN JUNE AND ARRIVED IN A THAI REFUGEE CAMP IN LATE JULY. REFUGEE WAS FORMERLY A WELL-TO-DO RESIDENT OF PHNOM PENH WHO MANAGED TO OBSCURE HIS IDENTITY IN EARLY PURGES OF FORMER KHMER ELITE. THE REFUGEE CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN IN A POSITION TO BE AWARE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN PHNOM PENH. LEADERSHIP STRIFE AND A RENEWED PURGE ASSOCIATED WITH IT LED THE REFUGEE TO FLEE TO THAILAND. RTA J-2 ATTRIBUTED REPORTS OF STRIFE IN CAMBODIAN LEADERSHIP TO A CAMBODIAN ARMY CAPTAIN OR MAJOR CAPTURED DURING RECENT BORDER SKIRMISHES.

2. REGARDLESS OF IDENTITY OF SOURCE, MFA AND J-2 CREDIT REPORTS THAT CAMBODIAN INFORMATION MINISTER HU NIM WAS KILLED AS RESULT OF A LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE IN PHNOM PENH. THAIS BELIEVE IENG SARY AND HOU YUON MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN IMPLICATED IN THE PLOT. THIA ANALYSTS SEE HU NIM, HOU YUON AND IENG SARY AS MAJOR MEMBERS OF A PRO-VIET-NAM FACTION IN CAMBODIAN LEADERSHIP CIRCLES, A FACTOR WHICH MAY HAVE LED TO THEIR POSSIBLE LOSS OF POWER, OR IN HU NIM'S CASE, EXECUTION. ROLE IENG SARY MAY PLAY AT UPCOMING UNGA SESSION (WHICH HE ATTENDED LAST YEAR) COULD INDICATE WHETHER HE HAS SUFFERED REDUCTION OF POWER IN THE REPORTED LEADERSHIP CRISIS. MFA INTERLOCUTOR COMMENTED THAT LATEST APPEARANCE BY IENG SARY, OF WHICH HE WAS AWARE, WAS DURING TRAVEL ABROAD LAST MARCH AFTER DISCOVERY OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PLOT BUT BEFORE THE MOVE WAS MADE AGAINST ITS SUPPOSED PERPETRATORS.

3. AS CORROBORATING EVIDENCE OF A CRISIS, RTG SOURCES CITED INTEL THAT ALL BUT ONE OF CAMBODIA'S MILITARY COMMANDERS IN THE THAI-CAMBODIA BORDER AREA WERE REMOVED TO PHNOM PENH IN RECENT MONTHS. REPLACEMENTS ARE ALL NEW FACES. J-2 SPECULATED THAT DISSATISFACTION IN PHNOM PENH OVER HANDLING OF THE BORDER SITUATION, ESPECIALLY AN INABILITY TO PREVENT CAMBODIANS FROM ESCAPING TO THAILAND, COULD HAVE BEEN A FACTOR IN THE LEADERSHIP FIGHT. MFA ALSO NOTED THAT REASON THE CAMBODIAN LIAISON OFFICE AT POIPET REFUSES TO ANSWER THAI CALLS MAY BE THAT THE SENIOR CAMBODIAN OFFICER, INSTALLED BY IENG SARY HIMSELF, HAS BEEN REMOVED.

4. MFA AND J-2 STRESSED THE TENTATIVE AND SPECULATIVE NATURE AND THE SENSITIVITY OF THEIR ANALYSIS, PARTICULARLY THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THERE WAS ACTUALLY A COUPLOT AND WHAT ROLE, IF ANY, HU NIM, HOU YUON, AND IENG SARY MIGHT HAVE PLAYED. THAIS ASKED FOR USG VIEWS.

5. COMMENT: WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY AVAILABLE, PERTINENT INFORMATION AND ANY COMMENT WASHINGTON MAY WISH TO SHARE WITH THE RTG ON POSSIBLE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CAMBODIA.

6. PRESUMABLY, THERE IS SOME SYMPATHY IN CAMBODIA FOR CLOSER TIES WITH VIET-NAM, BUT AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR BY CAMBODIANS ALONG THE BORDER AREAS OF SOUTH VIET-NAM, REPORTS FROM HANOI AND VIENTIANE OF BLUNT DISDAIN EXPRESSED BY CAMBODIAN DIPLOMATS RECENTLY CONCERNING CLOSER CAMBODIAN-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS AND A LOSS OF POWER BY PRO-VIET-NAM CAMBODIANS, IF TRUE, GIVE EVIDENCE THAT THOSE IN POWER IN PHNOM PENH STILL FIERCELY RESIST ANY NOTION OF MOVING CLOSER TO HANOI, OR OF JOINING VIENTIANE AND HANOI
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IN A CLUB RUN BY VIETNAMESE.
O'DONOHUE

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Message Attributes

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